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The Crisis Of Masculinity In The Economic Crisis Context

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Abstract

This article describes two important contemporary phenomena – the crisis of masculinity and the economic crisis. In general they are treated as the independent parts of life. In the analysis below the economic sphere was taken into consideration as a part of stereotype about masculinity. The idea of article is based on the statistics made by Eurostat. Important part of the article consists also of the scientific theories and articles connected with economy or gender problems. The aim of the research was to find some connotations between the crisis of masculinity and economic crisis – especially in 2 points: the rate of unemployment and the rate of marriages. The data comes from the surveys made in years 2004-2011 – 3 years before the Global Financial Crisis and 3 years after it had started. In the text below the emphasis is putted more on the effects of analysis than on analysis itself.

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1. Introduction

At the beginning it is needed to say that there is a lot of researches connected with masculinity itself and economy itself but the importance of coincidence and correlations between these 2 spheres seems to be underappreciated in scientific debate. There is a discourse of a man as breadwinner and the position of man after the revolution between sexes in twentieth century, but there is not concrete visible step into the research of man in the financial crisis context. My short analysis is only the small part of the researches, which are possible to make on international scale. Because of the circumstances, possibilities and time limits I concentrate myself mainly on two variables (unemployment and marriage/1000 persons) in European countries.

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2. The Global Financial Crisis in Europe – economic cause and psychological effect

The Global Financial Crisis, as is called the economic crisis, which has began in 2007 and which has spread from USA to Europe in very quick way, at the beginning was connected with global economic imbalances. The inequality of financial liquidity was the natural effect of that situation. Problematic were initially the subprime mortgages. Many companies and households went into debts. The breakdown in the market for credit defaults has initiated the problem with financial security. Than it occurred that the problem of unemployment and massive panic, it has driven into a psychological crisis – as an effect of problems in economy. It has shown also another important factor for the masculinity's research – the lack of possibility to show the material resources could be seemed as a basis of lower self-confidence (Bookman, 2009; Kriesler, 2009). It is needed to underline that this psychological problem touched especially men, which are stereotypically seen as a sex, which manifests its power through the material possession of things.

3. The crisis of masculinity – redefining man in contemporary societies

The masculinity as a gender category has many dimensions. Even though nowadays it is more correct to say that exist plural masculinities rather than singular masculinity, the stereotype about man seems to have unchanged place in contemporary global societies. On the one hand after the sexual revolution, when the women received more rights, the situation between sexes seemed to be changed by the public sphere circumstances, on the other hand in mentality still remains the vision of man as a person, who should have the material resources. It is visible especially in conservative societies, but partially also in liberal ones. The “prince charming” is rich, good-looking, independent, courageous (Badinter & Davis, 1997; Brannon, 2002; Giddens, 1992). It is worth to tell, that also in pop-culture the vision of man is often connected with the force, power and material goods.

In this context it seem to be justified to say, that in the economic crisis circumstances the position of man has started to be endangered. Without goods and money they cannot fully present their power and force and in the same time their self-esteem decrease. Also the feeling of attractiveness seems to be changed after the degradation of financial status. Here it starts the psychological crisis mentioned in the paragraph about economic crisis itself.

4. About the project “Masculinity and economy – the crisis context”

The project “Masculinity and economy – the crisis context” is the part of project, which has been made individually. The lack of the team and the lack of funding were the two main reasons to limit the analysis mainly to the ambient data. I based on scientific articles published in the important journals as for example: *The Economic and Labour Relations Review*, *Men and Masculinities*. The important part of my analysis consists also on the data from surveys, especially from Eurostat Yearbooks. In this article I would like to show only two the most important, in my opinion, variables, which from the economic and gendered point of view seemed to be the rate of male unemployment and the rate of marriages. These two variables are strongly connected with the financial sphere and with the changes in mentality. The data is presented in the table below.

Table 1. The rate of male unemployment and marriages in Europe between 2005-2011 (Eurostat).

	Male Unemployment	Marriages/1000 persons
2005	7,9	4,9
2006	7,6	4,9
2007	6,6	4,9
2008	6,6	4,9
2009	9,0	4,9
2010	9,7	4,5

2011

9,5

4,4

As the table shows, the rate of male unemployment increased dramatically when the Global Financial Crisis has appeared – between the years 2008 and 2009 it has changed in almost 3 percentage points (also the female unemployment has increased, but the percentage difference was lower: from 7,5 in 2008 to 8,8 in 2009). There is also visible the change in marital status – the number of marriages per 1000 persons has decreased at circa 0,5 percentage points. The second data seem to be irrelevant in comparison to unemployment rate, but in fact there is a need to see stability in marriage rate before the crisis - it had not changed since 2005 – and the lack of this stability since 2009/2010 – about two years since the beginning of crisis. This coincidence could make a correlation between male unemployment and the will to marriage – it is only one of dimensions connected with marital status, but it seem to be worth to make an additional research in this topic.

5. Summary

Concluding the question of crisis in its two views: masculine and economic, it is needed to tell, that these two spheres of life were and still are strongly correlated. As long as in the mentality of global society the man will be the stronger owner of goods, the situation of this sex would be dependent on financial status and career possibilities in public sphere. This connotation could lead to more often male psychological crisis caused by the uncertain situation on global labour market. It seems to be a topic important for the economist as well as for the social scientist and gender studies specialists.

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